

8
Anti-Slavery Office,
New York, Dec. 4, 1857.

70

Dear Garrison,

I accept, in good faith, your explanation of the action of the Executive Committee in my case, and your assurance, on your own and their behalf, that the measure was adopted not willingly but with reluctance, for pecuniary reasons only, and not intended, either in substance or manner, to be unkind to me. Nevertheless, it was unkind in them, at least in appearance, to take such a step so suddenly and to announce it to me in a manner so perfunctory. They should have remembered that the ties which bound me to the Standard were ties of the heart, which could not be severed without pain on my part, even though the act were done with every demonstration of a

2

friendly spirit and dictated by an uncontrollable necessity. The duty of making such an announcement to me should not have been assigned to the member of the Committee who was least acquainted with me and therefore least likely to appreciate its effect upon my mind. I do not, however, blame Mr. Bowditch in the least. He was scarcely acquainted with me, and naturally told me the facts of the case with official brevity; and besides, he may have thought that some other member of the Committee, who knew me better, would promptly enlighten me in regard to the circumstances under which they acted.

The resolution of the Committee dismissed me with a pen-stroke, with as little apparent reluctance as they might be expected to exhibit in turning off a porter or an errand boy. On reading it I was first astonished, and then deeply grieved. Surely, said I to myself, the Committee must have changed their estimate of the value of my services since

the time when they sent after me to Philadelphia and entreated me to come hither. Reading it again, I found no word indicating a consciousness on the part of the Committee that the cause was to lose any thing by my discharge. Mr. Gay was ~~told~~ asked to "resume his former duties," and told that, "with the large literary aid now employed" [that is, as I understood it, with the aid of Miss Griffith's stories for the fourth page, which, requiring much revision to fit them for the press, increase rather than diminish the labors of the editors], he would find no difficulty in so doing! As, according to the Committee, Mr. Gay ^{would} ~~could~~ find no difficulty in taking the exclusive charge of affairs at this Office, was not the inference natural, that my services were no longer deemed essential to the efficiency of the paper, and that I was regarded as "a fifth wheel to the coach," that might well enough be dispensed with? This allusion to "literary aid," in such a connection, looked, moreover, as if Miss Griffith's contributions to the fourth page had been

4

accepted as preferable to my aid in the office.

I am sure there is not one of the Committee who would not, in my circumstances, have been affected precisely as I was by Mr. Bowditch's letter; and I cannot honestly charge myself with undue sensitiveness in feeling and writing as I did. The fact, moreover, that such action had been taken not only without premonition to Mr. Gay or me, but without consulting the Pennsylvania Committee, seemed inexplicable, except upon the hypothesis that my connection with the paper was considered of so little consequence that it might be surrendered at any moment when a plausible excuse should present itself. In this view of the case, the request to me to ~~name~~ intimate how long a notice I thought the Committee ought to give me of the time of my departure, instead of offering itself as an alleviation, seemed worse than indelicate.

I am grateful, however, for the assurance your letter affords that the Committee did and do esteem my services of

value to the cause, and they voted with regret to dismiss me; but I cannot help thinking that they were unjust to themselves as well as to me, in that they left me, at such a moment, to take all this for granted.

You mistake the import of the allusion, in my former letter, to the circumstances under which I came to the Standard and to what was then said of the probable permanency of my connection with it, if you suppose I intended to deny the right or question the duty of the Committee to discharge me, if, in their judgment, the exigencies of the cause should require them to do so. My complaint is not that I was removed, but that the act was done in a manner adapted to wound my feelings; and the allusion above referred to was simply intended to strengthen my argument against the precipitancy of the Committee.

It has been my joy and pride to serve the anti-slavery cause for these many years for a smaller salary than I could have obtained elsewhere. If it had been in my power, I would have served it with still greater joy and pride without any com-

compensation whatever, save that which accrues
 to the soul of every man who consecrates
 himself unselfishly to a great and good
 cause. It has been an exquisite pleasure
 to feel that my labors were esteemed of
 greater value to the cause than the money
 they ^{have} cost its friends, and that I had the con-
 fidence and affection of my fellow-laborers.
 Herein is my wealth; in all else I am poor. To
 touch these precious jewels is to touch the apple
 of my eye.

But I will say no more of my per-
 sonal relations to the ~~cause~~ ^{Society}; except that I shall
 submit cheerfully to the judgment of the Com-
 mittee. I will prepare to leave the office at
 any day which they may fix. In doing so,
 however, I shall make the greatest sacrifice
 of my life - not a sacrifice of silver ^{or} ~~and~~
 gold, for it is probable that my pecuniary
^{interests} will, on the whole, be promoted by the change -
 but of feeling and choice. If I could see
 any reason to hope that this sacrifice on
 my part would inure to the benefit of the
 Society or the cause, or if I could even feel

9
That it was unavoidable, I could endure
it with resignation and even with alacrity.
But I will frankly confess that I think the
Committee are under the influence of a panic,
and that they have yielded too soon and
too readily to discouragement. I fear, more-
over, that, absorbed as they are with the care
of the cause in Massachusetts, they do not
fully realize the importance of the work in
New York. If we only could carry ~~over~~^{the}
~~Society~~^{Society}, ~~salaries~~, by a great effort, through the pre-
sent crisis, which, in the nature of things,
must be temporary, we should place our-
selves in a position to strengthen the cause
here amazingly and thus reap the fruits
of past toil. The Society is out of debt, and,
even at the present rate of expenditure, the
pinch will not come till some months
hence, when, if the times should improve,
we ought to be able, by a special effort, to
collect funds to meet, in part at least,
the emergency. Even if we should have to
borrow a few hundred dollars for a time,
would not that be better than to ~~weaken~~^{cripple}
our operations at this important point?

8

I know there has long been a doubt, on the part of some of the Committee, of the wisdom of maintaining the Standard at so large an expense, and I fear that, in this crisis, others may be insensibly affected by this skepticism. The more I think of it, the greater is my wonder that the Committee, before ~~taking~~ ~~making~~ ~~deciding~~ upon such a measure of commitment, did not consult with friends here and in Philadelphia.

But I will not pursue the subject further, ~~and~~ ^{for} indeed I know I ought to distrust my own judgment when I find myself differing from those whose clear-sightedness in all that relates to the cause has been so often and so strikingly demonstrated.

I remain, dear Garrison, with the kindest regards for the Committee, one and all, and with unabated esteem and affection for yourself.

Your faithful fellow-laborer,

Oliver Johnson.